

# Wine Competitions: Re-evaluating the Gold Standard

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# Introduction

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As wine lovers, we're always looking for ways to identify high-quality wines – are gold medals from competitions relevant?

## Prior work

- Hodgson (2008) – competition judges generally unable to replicate their own judgments in subsequent evaluations of the same wine
- Hodgson (2009) – 98% of gold medal winners received no award or a bronze medal in at least one other competition (wines entered in 5 competitions)

## Methodology

- Use a “composite” score based on ratings from two prominent wine publications as a surrogate for wine quality following Ashton (2012)

# Data

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## Competition medal awards

- Ten US competitions (2013-2017)
- Observe only the winners
- Washington State wines

## Wine publication ratings

- Wine spectator and Wine Enthusiast (2013-2016)

## Data processing

- Wine names reconstructed to a consistent format then matched across information sources

# Is the gold standard consistent across competitions?

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Gold medal award rates vary tremendously – could be due to differences in quality of entrants or generosity

Utilize overlapping set of wines between competitions to hold quality constant

Seattle Wine Awards is the reference competition

Metric	Berger	Cascadia	Great Northwest	San Fran Chronicle	San Fran Intl.	Savor Northwest	TexSom
Number of Pairs	126	679	362	342	207	189	149
Reference Golds	79	431	242	200	140	129	95
Subject Golds	23	138	89	89	43	54	16
Ratio	3.4	3.1	2.7	2.2	3.3	2.4	5.9

# Is knowledge that a wine won a gold medal relevant?

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Differences in average “composite” score by highest medal achieved (include DG in gold category)

849 wines that received at a medal in at least one of the ten competitions

Observe only winners

Metric	Highest Medal Awarded			Number of Golds Awarded			
	Bronze	Silver	Gold	0	1	2	3+
Count	89	252	508	341	365	106	37
Percent of Total	10.5%	29.7%	59.8%	40.2%	43.0%	12.5%	4.4%
Average Score	88.6	88.7	88.9	88.7	88.9	89.0	89.2
Percent 90+	27.0%	29.4%	33.5%	28.7%	32.9%	34.9%	35.1%

# Are golds from some competitions more relevant than others?

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Compare composite scores for gold and non-gold medal winners in each competition

Competition	Count		Percent	Average Score			Percent Scoring 90+		
	B/S	Gold	Gold	B/S	Gold	Diff	B/S	Gold	Diff
Dan Berger	63	16	20%	88.5	89.5	1.1	22.2%	43.8%	21.5%
TexSom	203	24	11%	89.1	90.1	1.0	35.5%	58.3%	22.9%
Savor Northwest	66	25	27%	88.8	89.3	0.5	27.3%	36.0%	8.7%
Cascadia	283	98	26%	88.6	89.1	0.5	26.5%	33.7%	7.2%
San Francisco Intl.	136	35	20%	88.3	88.7	0.4	18.4%	25.7%	7.3%
San Francisco Chronicle	257	104	29%	88.7	88.8	0.1	27.2%	28.8%	1.6%
Seattle Wine & Food	42	18	30%	88.3	88.4	0.1	23.8%	33.3%	9.5%
Seattle Wine Awards	194	408	68%	88.9	88.9	0.1	33.5%	34.1%	0.6%
Great Northwest	209	71	25%	89.4	89.1	-0.3	42.6%	35.2%	-7.4%
Pacific Rim	29	13	31%	88.7	88.4	-0.3	27.6%	7.7%	-19.9%

# Logit models

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Probability of receiving a gold medal

Determinants

- Time – year entered
- Quality – composite score

	Cascadia	Great NW	San Fran. Chronicle	San Fran. Inter.	Seattle Wine Awards	TexSom	
Intercept	-16.09 **	5.57	-3.63	-13.58	-0.81	-34.32 **	
Quality	0.16 *	-0.08	0.02	0.13	0.02	0.37 **	
Time	0.27 **	0.15	0.17 *	0.15	-0.01	-0.38	
P(86)	9.0%	20.9%	18.3%	10.4%	67.2%	9.1%	
P(92)	20.6%	14.0%	20.6%	20.5%	69.6%	48.3%	
N	381	280	361	171	602	227	

note: \*statistically significant @ 0.05; \*\* @ 0.01

## What about double golds?

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Awarded more judiciously - typically represent wines receiving golds on all scorecards

Analysis includes double gold winners from the five national competitions + golds from TexSom

Award Type	Count	Average Score	Count Scoring		Percent >90
			<90	>90	
Double Gold	56	89.6	30	26	46.4%
Other Medal	386	88.7	280	106	27.5%



# Conclusions

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The gold standard is not consistent – some competitions are much more selective than others

Knowledge that a wine is a gold medal winner, by itself, has limited relevance to consumers

All golds are not created equal – some competitions may be more relevant than others

- Differences in judge qualifications, format and scoring systems, and selectivity
- In practice - it may be difficult to distinguish the good competitions from the bad!

Double gold medal winners from major national competitions may be worth a shot!

# Thank You

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